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DARYLL FORDE 1902–1973

PROFESSOR DARYLL FORDE, the Administrative Director of the International African Institute for just under thirty years, died at his home in London on Thursday, 3 May 1973, at the age of seventy-one.

C. Daryll Forde was born on 16 March 1902, the son of the Revd. J. P. D. Forde. He went to Middlesex County School at Tottenham and to University College London, where he took his B.A. in Geography in 1922 and his Ph.D. in Prehistoric Archaeology in 1928. He lectured in geography at the College from 1923 until 1928, undertaking archaeological research, especially in Wales. He then spent two years as Commonwealth Fellow in Anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley, where he worked with A. L. Kroeber and R. H. Lowie and did anthropological research among the Yuma and Hopi Indians of California and the south-west, an unusual field for a British researcher at that time. In 1930, at the very early age of twenty-eight, he was appointed Gregynog Professor of Geography and Anthropology at the University of Wales at Aberystwyth. Here he instituted studies of village and small town life in Wales, work then considered original for an anthropologist. In 1935 he started his long series of research visits to the Yakö people of the Cross River area of south-eastern Nigeria, thereby beginning his association with Africa. By 1939 he had thus carried out research in archaeology, geography, and social anthropology and had worked in three continents. In 1934 he had published his book *Habitat, Economy and Society* which has had great influence and is still a standard textbook, followed by several important papers in European archaeology, and the first of his long series of studies on the Yakö.

During the war Daryll Forde held a post in the Foreign Office research department. In 1945 he became the first Professor of Anthropology at his old college, University College London, where he remained until his retirement as Professor Emeritus in 1969. He trained a great many students who became research anthropologists and university teachers, most—although by no means all—working in various parts of Africa. As a professor he was unusual in that he maintained an holistic view of anthropology as a wide discipline embracing social anthropology, archaeology,

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physical anthropology, and linguistics. His students were given a broad comprehension of the anthropological view of the human experience; his remarkably extensive knowledge of ethnography and his ability to make all he spoke about fresh and exciting made him a superb teacher and research adviser.

In 1944 he succeeded Sir Reginald Coupland as Administrative Director of the International African Institute. Although it was formally a part-time post, he gave to it full-time energy and devotion. More detailed appreciations of his work at the Institute will appear in the next issue of this journal; here is presented only an outline. He directed the Institute with originality and total commitment, and with awareness of the importance of African studies in a changing world. He raised the necessary funds for its many programmes and made it into a formidable and prestigious institution, known where there is an interest in studies of Africa and its problems. He edited the journal *Africa* and, by his scholarly and conscientious hard work, made it one of the leading journals in the world dealing with human society and culture. In 1945 he established the *Ethnographic Survey of Africa*, a series of surveys of culture areas of the continent based on both field and library research; the volumes, which by the time of his death numbered almost sixty, provide a synoptic and comprehensive record of present knowledge of African societies. He initiated the series *African Abstracts* in 1950, which continued until abandoned for financial reasons last year. The volumes of the *Handbook of African Languages* were published from 1945 onwards and he continued the series of monographs by research fellows of the Institute and other authors which had built up the Institute's international scholarly reputation.

As Director, Daryll Forde travelled extensively in Africa and was known to many scholars and politicians of the continent. He conceived and organized the series of International African Seminars, each held in a different African country and attended by African, European, and other scholars concerned with Africa. These seminars dealt with problems of immediate social urgency for the inhabitants of the continent themselves rather than with matters of purely academic interest. To date there have been thirteen seminars, all of them resulting in published reports.

Daryll Forde was given many academic honours. He received the Wellcome medal of the Royal African Society and the Wellcome and Rivers medals of the Royal Anthropological Institute, and held the posts of President of that Institute and of Section H of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. In 1966 he was elected Fellow of the British Academy.

These details of his career give little indication of the man himself. Daryll Forde was a man of wide interests, concerns, and learning, with a delightful and contagious enthusiasm for everything about him. An essentially modest man who was never tempted to build up a following of academic disciples, he possessed a rare ability to encourage and help those around him in both formal matters and personal situations. Those who worked with him at the Institute appreciated his common-sense approach to day-to-day problems and his ability to make practical decisions. Authors and contributors to *Africa* and other publications were grateful for his advice and encouragement but many perhaps were not aware of the precision and painstaking nature of the editorial work he personally devoted to anything published by the Institute, for he took particular pride in maintaining the very high standards of scholarship for which it had always been known. He was a man of true kindness,

with a directness and lack of malice that were felt by all those with whom he had contact. His staff and his colleagues miss him greatly.

The Chairman writes :

I first met Daryll Forde a few years ago. Over lunch at his club, he suggested I might accept the Chairmanship of the International African Institute. Thereafter we were in frequent and close contact.

My deep admiration of his drive and devotion to the Institute's affairs grew steadily and I was proud to be counted among his friends. He was an inspiration to all those around him. Often we had keen discussion—scholar and layman. I learned much.

Over the last few months it was obvious that he was drawing on his reserves of strength, but his devotion and sense of duty sustained him to the end. He is sadly missed. We have lost a great leader.

DARYLL FORDE

An Address given by Professor N. A. Barnicot at the Thanksgiving Service for Daryll Forde held at the University Church of Christ the King, Gordon Square, London, on Tuesday, 26 June 1973.

About four years ago some of us met at a ceremonial farewell to Daryll Forde when he retired from the Chair of Anthropology at this College. Like many such occasions it had a bitter-sweet flavour; we were pleased to be able to express our appreciation of him, but sad that we were losing an old colleague and friend. Today, when we are faced with the ending of his life, not merely of a stage in his career, the sadness is much heavier and it is unrelieved by the feeling that anything we say or do can give him pleasure. As it turned out the farewell party I have mentioned did mark the end of his work in the Department, for although we kept some space for him—it could hardly be called a room—ill-health and the demands of his work at the African Institute made it impossible for him to use it much.

Daryll Forde was Professor of Anthropology here for close on 25 years. When he took the Chair in 1945 the department was a new venture and it started modestly in one small upper room. He gradually built it up to become one of the major teaching departments in this country. In those long-lost days soon after the war we had few students, but among them were some of the best we ever had.

As an undergraduate Daryll had studied Geography at the College and he went on to do postgraduate work in ethnography. This subject, strangely enough, was at that time nurtured in the Department of Anatomy, owing to the wide-ranging genius of Professor Elliot Smith. The last time that I heard Daryll speak in public was last year at a centenary commemoration of Elliot Smith's birth, and he gave a very sincere and interesting account of those early days. After an interlude in the United States where he studied the Indian cultures of the South-west and of the West Coast, he returned to become Professor of Geography and Anthropology at Aberystwyth at the remarkably young age of twenty-eight. Perhaps it was because he came to Anthropology from Geography, which is itself a very broad subject, that he had a wider view of it than most of his contemporaries in this country. He was keenly

interested in archaeology and here he must have gained a great deal from his friendship with Gordon Childe which dated from his student days. Unlike some of his fellows in social anthropology he does not seem to have felt the need to purge himself from any taint of Darwinism and he was therefore able to retain an unhampered interest in the biological side of the subject.

In the years immediately before the war he was in West Africa and there he carried out his well-known studies on the peoples of the Cross River. Perhaps this was the definitive beginning of his lasting devotion to the anthropology of Africa. When he came back to the College in 1945 he also accepted the honorary directorship of the International African Institute. This meant a lot of extra work but it gave him even greater scope for promoting the study of African peoples. Evelyn Forde, to whom Daryll owed so many years of domestic happiness, has told me something of the trials of those early days. Not the least of them was the Chairman, that illustrious colonial administrator Lord Lugard, who, it appears, found it difficult to remember that he was not still governing a large slice of the British Empire. Daryll retained the directorship until his death and despite failing health he continued to work at the Institute and to worry greatly about its future in a world that had changed vastly since he took over the job.

It is not my intention to go into more detail about his career, nor, as a biologist, can I venture to assess his contributions to socio-cultural anthropology. In any case most of us who knew him well will be thinking today of the human personality rather than the biographical facts. Some may maintain that in the reckoning of a man's life only the work counts. I do not hold this austere view and I suspect that if we reject or lose the capacity to savour the subtleties and infinite variety of personality, we open the door to all kinds of inhumanities and horrors.

Death seems particularly hideous and hard to accept when it strikes a friend who had a great zest for life. Daryll Forde had this zest abundantly. Indeed when he was in top form it was sometimes apt to leave more contemplative and sober spirits in a state of mild exhaustion. Even in the last few years, when age and illness had brought fatigue and discomfort, his boyish enthusiasm was easily kindled by contact with friends. He was indeed a very sociable man who needed to have people around him and who responded generously to their presence. He was a great talker, but, unlike many of this kind, he did not talk exclusively or even mainly about himself and he was also a good listener. His gift for talking showed itself best in casual conversation and the sparkle was somewhat dimmed by the constraints imposed by the lecture theatre. His ability to listen sympathetically yet critically, especially when the talk concerned anthropology, sprang from a genuine interest in what other people were doing. I well remember how he used to ask me from time to time whether I had made a 'breakthrough'. He evidently felt that this was the proper pattern of advance in the natural sciences and perhaps he was right. Anyway I always felt rather ashamed when I had to admit that as far as I could see I had not. I think that this ready interest in the work of others was a very important element in guiding the direction of his activities and in determining the nature of his achievement. Both at the College and the Institute he spent a great deal of time advising other workers, assessing their research and encouraging them to further efforts. There must be a host of anthropologists who owe him a debt for this. When he was not advising them personally he

was making knowledge more easily accessible to them by initiating and supervising the publication of books, monographs and journals and by organising conferences.

These activities undoubtedly brought into play many of his talents and satisfied various facets of his personality. He was able to deploy his encyclopaedic knowledge, his desire to organize material and above all his need to operate with people. But it left too little time and energy to pursue fieldwork himself or to crystallize his own wide experience in a flow of books and papers. This I always felt was a pity, but who is to say that his contribution was the less valuable because it did not always take the orthodox scholarly channels? His early book *Habitat, Economy and Society* still stands as an excellent example of factual, descriptive anthropology and his main strength was probably in this sphere. One felt that he was less at home in those theoretical and philosophical realms that are so much esteemed by many social anthropologists.

Being in a church gives a proper note of solemnity to this gathering. But it is worth remembering that Daryll Forde was neither a solemn nor a religious man. Of course, as an anthropologist he was well aware of the importance of religion in social life and as I say this I can imagine him expounding the significance of what we are doing today. I am sure that he would have been touched that so many people came to honour his memory, but I do not think he would have wished us to be too solemn about it. He was refreshingly free from the tiresome self-importance that is apt to afflict academics and he retained to the end a pleasing vein of irreverence. These qualities, I believe, stemmed in part from a genuine modesty about his own abilities and achievements. He did not set himself above others and as a young man I was impressed that one could always argue with him as if one were an equal without the fear that he would take advantage of his seniority or rank.

It seems to me that he was one of those good men who tend to assume that other people are also good. It must have been painful to him to find that this was not always the case. He was singularly free from guile and not at all skilled at the devious manoeuvres that seem to be required for a certain type of success. But in mentioning this underlying innocence I certainly do not wish to evoke an image of insipid saintliness. He was far too lively for that. In fact he was capable of strong, if transient antagonisms and of caustic comment that on occasion reached libellous proportions. To some extent such outbursts were part of his exuberance and it is quite clear that malice was a very minor element in his warm and outgoing personality. I think that there were very few people he would not have tried to help if he became aware that they were in trouble.

Whatever kinds of personal immortality may or may not exist, it is certain that men have a continuity through their genes and through the traces that they leave in the memories of others. As for the genes, Daryll Forde left two stalwart sons by his first marriage and both are here today. The company of those who have been influenced by personal contact with him, by his writings and more indirectly by the organisations that he helped to build, is certainly very large; it is a living and growing testimony to the value of his life's work.

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